

Dr. Peterson

National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellows Coffee

9:15 a.m. Wednesday, April 1, 2015, Library, 7th Floor, Ferst Room

Good morning, and welcome to this gathering of NSF Graduate Research Fellows. We're very glad that you're here, and we sincerely hope this will be one of many occasions in which you rub elbows and exchange ideas with your research associates in this group. At Georgia Tech, we are firm believers that collaboration is a foundation for solving some of the world's most daunting technological challenges.

Before we proceed, I'd like to recognize a couple of distinguished guests. Dr. Rafael Bras, our provost, is here with us, and we also have Dr. Susan Cozzens, Vice Provost for Graduate Education and Faculty Affairs, who serves as the PI (principal investigator) for the National Science Foundation grant that funds the NSF Fellowships.

On Tuesday morning (March 31), we found out which students have been chosen for the newest cohort of NSF Graduate Research Fellowships. Thirty-six current Georgia Tech students received awards, and another 13 were named honorable mention. Students from around the U.S. will be deciding where to go this fall with their NSF awards. Several of them will be joining us at Georgia Tech. A gathering is planned next fall for those who are already NSF Fellows at Georgia Tech to meet the new NSF Fellows.

From that group of 36 new NSF Graduate Research Fellows, we're pleased to have Mohamad Ali Najia with us here this morning. It is a big day for him since he is also an InVenture Prize finalist, so I'll probably be seeing him again tonight at the InVenture finals in the Ferst Center for the Arts. Mohamad won a Goldwater Scholarship last year, was editor of *The Tower*, and graduated this past December. Congratulations, Mohamad.

I hope that most of you have heard about our 25-year strategic plan called “Designing the Future.” In 2010, we asked the entire campus to engage in the process of coming up with a blueprint to build the 21st-century technological university. They came up with some ambitious goals, and we’ve made great progress in the five years since the strategic plan was launched.

Goal No. 2 from that plan is to “Sustain and Enhance Excellence in Scholarship and Research.” We talk about the fact that Georgia Tech is uniquely suited to address numerous challenges faced by society to improve the human condition. Your presence here and the advances you will make through your research will help Georgia Tech create a culture that encourages inclusive, multi- and trans-disciplinary approaches to solving these challenges.

Please allow me to share a few facts and figures about your group:

- Currently 137 Georgia Tech NSF Graduate Research Fellows
- 103 are On Tenure (receiving a stipend and here)
- 33 are On Reserve (not currently receiving a stipend — may be here and supported by another grant or may be doing research elsewhere). For example, we have one NSF Fellow on a Fulbright in Switzerland and another Fellow who is also doing research in Switzerland and holds a Whitaker Fellowship). Some students have completed their three years of funding but can remain On Reserve another two years to be eligible for programs such as NSF GROW that funds research abroad.
- 1 Deferral — One student in the Army Reserves was working on his Ph.D. here as an NSF Fellow, was called up to serve again, and left in mid-March for Afghanistan. He hopes to return to his research next January.

To even be considered for an NSF Graduate Research Fellowship is an honor because only those with both a high level of passion for learning more about their subject area and a distinguished record of academic achievement in that field can apply. To be chosen means that you are among the best of the best.

Let me close by admitting that we have a small ulterior motive at bringing you together today. We hope that this event will assist in building an NSF Fellow networking system at Georgia Tech. I encourage each of you here to get to know others in our NSF community and take these contacts into future work. We understand how busy you are with your research and your everyday lives, but we strongly believe that a vibrant, connected network and community will serve all Fellows well.

Thank you for your attendance and your dedication. We wish you continued good luck in your research endeavors.